

Patton Park Pool Project Questions

Q1. The Recreation Department is a joint Hamilton and Wenham department. What happens if the town of Wenham decides not to contribute to the pool project? Why should Hamilton foot the whole bill?

The joint recreation program has a track record of success, due in no small part to the level of cooperation between the two Towns. Without a fair share contribution from Wenham, out-of-town pool usage fees must be applied to Wenham residents or perhaps an annual allocation through the operating budget. We are exploring all options.

Q2. The pool facility is only used for approx 3 months of the year and serves about 250 to 300 people on a regular basis. Why isn't there a more reasonably priced option (\$2.1 to \$3.5 million is way over the top) for a family style pool and remodeled bathhouse that the park program children can use? There are many pools nearby that can be used for swim meets and practice such as Asbury Grove (Olympic pool), Gordon College Bennett Center, Ipswich YMCA, Beverly YMCA, Beverly Athletic Center, Manchester Athletic Club, Lydon Aquatic Center Danvers, etc.

We've heard repeatedly from professional pool consultants that the pool has reached the end of its useful life. These same consultants have indicated that refurbishing the current pool would cost as much as building a new pool. The consultant's full presentation is available on the Town's website.

Also, this question suggests that the pool is seen through the lens of its current functionality and not its full potential as a community asset. A community pool is much more than a family-style backyard pool. It is meant to meet the needs of a broad cohort of users and serve many of those needs and functions simultaneously.

As important to the functional aspects, a community pool draws families together and helps build "community" in the broadest sense of the word. Community-building anchors people to the town in which they live, and helps to break down the silo walls that attribute to disenfranchisement and degeneration of social and communal bonds.

In addition to various uses by the swim team, the new pool provides the following benefits:

The proposed configuration would be a significant draw for the Summer Park Program. Remember that the Park Program is the primary source of funding for more or less all of the operating costs of the Recreation Department except personnel and a portion of general building and utility expenses; revenues from a much expanded summer park program will offset a significant portion of these costs which are currently paid for out of the general fund (i.e. taxes).

The zero-entry pool is very important to the project. Foremost, it meets ADA accessibility standards; it will allow seniors who are currently unable to access the pool because of physical limitations the ability to swim and participate in senior

aquatic programs; and, it provides safe access and recreation for an entire group of children that are either too old/big for the Kiddie pool, and too small to be in the big pool with older kids and adults. The current lift mechanism that is used to raise and lower individuals with various physical impairments is a barrier to access, not an enabling device. The lift mechanism draws attention to and stigmatizes the user and separates them from the rest of the aquatic community. Many do not use the pool who otherwise would because of this feature. The lift mechanism also diminishes the functionality of the pool as an entire corner or section is preserved for its use.

What the Recreation Master Plan demonstrated is that residents currently do use other pool facilities, but would much rather have their child in a program in town. This cuts down on the amount of running around (transportation issues) they have to do, allows the family to participate in programs or general recreation with friends and neighbors rather than strangers, and gives older children something more to do without having to occupy the entire family.

The snack bar/concession allows families to stay at the pool for longer periods of time, it can be used year-round, and is a great vehicle for generating revenue – some town's even lease their concession stand out on annual basis because of the lack of other available "quick-lunch" options.

The price tag of \$2.5 million meant to cover all aspects and contingencies; keep in mind that this has to go out to bid and there is a potential that the actual cost will be less.

Q3. Operations:

(A) How much will it cost to maintain and operate the new facility? B) Will new employees need to be hired to run it?

Pro-forma operating budgets are being developed. Yes, operating costs will increase but only marginally and pool fees (in addition to increased participation in the summer program) will cover these additional costs – no additional tax dollars will be needed.

(C) And which town would do the hiring?

Hamilton is the lead agent for the Joint Recreation Program and would remain such.

(D) Will both towns share the maintenance and operating expenses?

Yes, just as all other operating costs.

(E) How much will insurance cost?

No additional costs – MIIA indicates that premiums would not change.

Q4 Funding:

(A) Will there be some private funding? B) Will there be some CPA funding? (C) CPA funding from both towns? (D) How will this project affect our already too high property tax rate?

It is possible that some private donations will be forthcoming, but there are sufficient funds on hand, with ~\$1.8 million on deposit for the Community Preservation Committee account and more than \$400,000 in revenue annually. This project can happen without taking away from other town-goals and projects without costing taxpayers a penny more.

Q5. How many small towns in Massachusetts have their own municipal pool? Answer – none! Click on link for confirmation: (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/swimming-pools-wading-pools-and-spray-deck.html>)

Actually there are - Wayland, Weston, Clinton, and Southbridge are all about the size of Hamilton and Wenham.

Q6. Has an engineering and septic study been done to confirm feasibility of such a large project?

Yes, sufficient site evaluation has taken place to know that septic of sufficient capacity will fit on the site.

Q7. Has a traffic study been done to measure the impact and safety issues?

Not fully, but much like the septic issue we are confident that the parking will be engineered to provide safe entrance and egress to the site. Keep in mind, there is an additional entry point on the far side of the park (off Asbury) that can also be factored into the parking schema. The parking lot at the Winthrop School and public safety building accommodate as many if not more cars without a negative impact on safety and the entrance to these lots are even closer to the intersection – to the extent that traffic is an issue, the site can be designed to handle it.

Q8. Is this the optimum location for such a large pool? What research has been done for other locations?

The current location is ideal and within walking distance from many neighborhoods. It is centrally located, in an area already noted for recreation activities, is the cornerstone of the Summer Park Program (that funds a significant portion of recreation costs), and is the only area of town that is not residential.

Q9. What may happen if the area is flooded in the spring, as so often happens?

Flooding is not an issue – the current pool has resided in its current location for more than 50 years and is not susceptible to flooding – the new pool would be at a similar height.

Q10. Where is the information about the study saying a larger pool is wanted by the townspeople?

Where is there information that suggests it is not – both the Recreation Master Plan and the survey conducted by the Pool Committee demonstrates strong support for an improved pool. If the proposed option can be paid for without increasing the costs to the taxpayer, then Town Meeting will determine if townsfolk's support the project or not.

Q11. Is there data available on how much income the larger pool may provide? If 300 families pay \$100 for use of the pool, will \$30,000 cover expenses and maintenance?

The Aquatics Group of Weston & Sampson provided preliminary numbers at the presentation of September 30, a copy of which is on the Town's website.

Q12. Another option should be considered.... Fill the pool in. A \$3 million amenity that is used 3 months of the year is an extravagance we cannot afford in a town where the property tax rate is already out of sight.

The pool is a major contributing factor to the success of the Summer Park Program and without it the program would wither and fade away. This would have a significant detrimental effect on other recreation programs, and would diminish the attractiveness of the town.

The pool reconstruction project can happen with available funds and will not cost taxpayers another dime.

Other important facts:

In order to open the pool next year, it will cost at least \$30,000 – this type of expense is a throwaway and does nothing to preserve the asset. Simply put, the pool needs to either be renovated or closed. For all the reasons listed above, the pool should be renovated.

The existing pool is not salvageable. There is no scenario that would allow the pool to be repaired. The entire pool structure and plumbing is well beyond its useful life and ability to repair and will have to be completely removed and replaced.

Assume for a minute that only the six-lane pool was installed; no kiddie pool or concession stand – in this scenario an additional reserve tank and leech field must be installed, the cost of which is not too far off of a new septic system.